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# RIVERVIEW HISTORIC DISTRICT

## SOUTHWEST MIAMI

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Designation Report – Amended



Historic and Environmental Preservation Board



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI  
PRESERVATION OFFICER,  
MEGAN SCHMITT  
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD  
ON THE FINAL DESIGNATION OF THE  
RIVERVIEW HISTORIC DISTRICT

Written by Marina Novaes,  
Historic Preservation Planner II  
Date: April 2015  
Amended in May 5, 2015

## Location and site maps



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## I- General Information

Historic Name: Riverview Subdivision

Current Name: N/A

Cultural Period of Significance: 1920s – 1960s

Architectural Period of Significance: 1920 - 1950

Location: East Little Havana

Present Owner: Multiple owners

Present use: Residential / Commercial

Zoning: T4-R

Folio No.: 01-4138-003-4140; 01-4138-003-4160; 01-4138-003-1320; 01-4138-003-1330; 01-4138-125-0001;  
01-4138-003-3920; 01-4138-003-4200; 01-4138-003-4180; 01-4138-003-3940; 01-4138-003-1390;  
01-4138-003-1340; 01-4138-003-1400; 01-4138-101-0001; 01-4138-003-1420; 01-4138-003-1430;  
01-4138-003-1440; 01-4138-003-1450; 01-4138-003-1371; 01-4138-003-1470; 01-4102-005-3750;  
01-4102-005-3760; 01-4102-005-3770; 01-4138-003-2620; 01-4138-003-3970; 01-4138-003-1570;  
01-4138-003-1580; 01-4138-003-1590; 01-4138-003-1540; 01-4138-003-1600; 01-4138-003-1530;  
01-4138-003-1610; 01-4138-003-1520; 01-4138-003-1620; 01-4138-003-1510; 01-4138-026-0001;  
01-4138-003-1500; 01-4138-003-1490; 01-4138-003-1480; 01-4138-003-1650; 01-4102-002-0550;  
01-4102-002-0560; 01-4102-005-3880; 01-4102-005-4200; 01-4102-005-4210; 01-4102-005-4220;  
01-4138-005-0012; 01-4138-003-1561; 01-4138-003-1770; 01-4138-003-1730; 01-4138-003-1720;  
01-4138-003-1710; 01-4138-003-1700; 01-4138-003-1690; 01-4138-003-1680; 01-4138-003-1670;  
01-4138-003-1660; 01-4102-003-0030; 01-4102-005-4330; 01-4102-005-4310; 01-4102-005-4300;  
01-4138-003-4170; 01-4138-003-4150; 01-4138-003-4190; 01-4138-003-3930; 01-4138-003-3960;  
01-4138-003-3950; 01-4138-003-1560; 01-4138-005-0010; 01-4138-005-0011; 01-4138-003-1750;  
01-4138-003-2520; 01-4138-003-1950; 01-4102-002-0440; 01-4102-002-0450; 01-4102-002-0430;  
01-4102-002-0460; 01-4102-002-0470; 01-4102-002-0480; 01-4102-002-0490; 01-4102-005-3720;  
01-4102-005-3730; 01-4102-002-0500; 01-4102-005-3740; 01-4102-002-0510; 01-4102-005-3870;  
01-4102-002-0520; 01-4102-005-3890; 01-4102-002-0530; 01-4102-005-3900; 01-4102-002-0540;  
01-4102-005-4190; 01-4102-005-4180; 01-4102-005-4170; 01-4102-003-0010; 01-4102-005-4320;  
01-4102-005-4340

Boundary: refer to map attached.

Setting: The Riverview Historic District is located within the southwest portion of the city known as East Little Havana.

Integrity: The Riverview Historic District consists of one hundred thirteen (113) resources of which eighty three (83) built between the 1920 and 1950 are considered contributing and thirty (30) built after 1950 or are significantly altered, non-contributing. The small district is one of the last portions of the Riverside area that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, and continuity of resources with a high degree of integrity required for a district historic designation.

## II- Statement of Significance

Little Havana is not an ordinary neighborhood; many tales had been told about the district long before it became known as Little Havana. Layer over layer of history compose the region's unique outline starting from the birth of the city when the area was nothing more than pine woods on the southwest bank of the Miami River across from downtown Miami. Mary Brickell, who owned most of the land on the south bank of the river, platted an area that she named *Riverside* in 1913. The *Lawrence Estate* subdivision platted by the Tatum brothers in 1912 was located just west of *Riverside* and *Riverview* subdivisions. Also platted by Mary Brickell, *Riverview* (1919) was a subdivision in-between *Riverside* and *Lawrence Estate* subdivisions where the "Riverview Historic District" is mostly located; nevertheless the entire area was known as *Riverside*. The region was carved out of pine woods and rested on an Oolite limestone ridge, "The Beautiful Ridge" as it was called by the Tatum brothers who were the primary developers of the area in the early 1900s.

Two main commercial corridors developed in the southwest region of the city, West Flagler Street (originally 12<sup>th</sup> ST) and SW 8th Street (originally 20<sup>th</sup> ST) which later became part of the "Tamiami Trail" that connects Miami to Tampa on the west coast of Florida. By the 1920s, the vicinity was rapidly getting developed and not long after, in the 1930s, the first large ethnic group had moved into the area. The Jewish population was drawn to Miami by the promise of cheap land, rapid growth, and warm climate; they brought with them their businesses, professional offices, and institutions. During this period, the area saw the construction of many apartment buildings to provide for the housing needs of the growing number of Jews and other groups that moved in from all over the nation attracted by the extraordinary overnight growth of the city; people either pursuing new business or employment opportunities.<sup>1</sup> Besides apartment buildings, the area was also filled with bungalows which were a fit option for moderate income housing that was in demand to accommodate the growing middle-class population; other important ethnic groups in the area were: Greek, Bahamian, and Armenian. In the 1960s the area became known as Little Havana for housing the growing number of Cubans who started to arrive in waves initially in the 1950s fleeing the Batista dictatorial regime following the Castro overthrow of Cuba's government in 1959.

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<sup>1</sup> Cordoba, Hilton. "Cultural and Spatial Perceptions of Miami's Little Havana". Master's Thesis, Florida Atlantic University. 2011.

*The 1850 Swamp Land Act, a federal law which essentially provided a mechanism for transferring the title of federally owned swampland to private parties agreeing to drain the swampland and turn it into productive land*, was the green light for the city's expansion towards the west. *As a result of the act, Florida received 20 million acres to be developed, presumably for agricultural use.*<sup>2</sup> In 1904, Napoleon [Bonaparte] Broward was elected governor on a pro-drainage platform and in 1905 the Board of Drainage Commissioners was founded and endowed with the authority to create a system of drainage canals between the Everglades and Biscayne Bay.<sup>3</sup>

The sale of Everglades land and dredging began at about the same time. Tracts of land were sold in both small and large parcels, some in the tens of thousands of acres. Two of the largest purchasers in Miami-Dade County were Richard J. Bolles, who bought swampland in North Dade, and the Tatum Brothers in South Dade and around Miami.<sup>4</sup>

The Tatum brothers owned one of the largest real estate corporation in Dade-County that included several firms such as the *Tatum Brothers Company, Lawrence Estate Land Company, the Miami Traction Company, Tatum's Ocean Park Company, Tatum Land Company, Miami Land and Development Company, the Florida Title Company, Miami Abstract Company, and the Tatum Brothers Real Estate and Investment Company*. The brothers, Johnson R., Smiley M., and Bethel B. Tatum were natural of Dawson County, Georgia; the family first settled in Kissimmee – Orlando area - and then Miami in the 1890s.<sup>5</sup>

Bethel B. Tatum moved to Florida in 1881 at the age of seventeen and worked in the newspaper business. Johnson Tatum, two years younger, went to business college and moved to Miami in 1911 to work in the banking and insurance business. The third brother, Smiley, was a chemist for many years in Bartow, Florida until acid fumes injured his eyes; he moved to Miami in 1902.<sup>6</sup>

Bethel B. Tatum, or B. B. Tatum as he liked to be called, was the first of the brothers to move to Miami in 1899 when he purchased a half interest in the *Miami Metropolis* which later became *The Miami News*. As the editor of the growing town's afternoon newspaper, Bethel observed the

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia. 2015. "Swamp Land Act of 1850." last modified on 17 January 2015.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swamp\\_Land\\_Act\\_of\\_1850](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swamp_Land_Act_of_1850)

<sup>3</sup> Metropolitan Dade County. "From Wilderness to Metropolis – The History and Architecture of Dade County, Florida 1825-1940." 1982. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "The Book of Florida." The Janus O. Jones Co., 1925. Page 569

<sup>6</sup> Klepser, Carolyn. "Lost Miami Beach"



rising business of real estate and its profitable potential. Before long, he sold his interest in the paper in 1905 and joined his brothers in creating a vast empire engaged in the development and sale of real estate.<sup>7</sup>

Bethel's knowledge of marketing due to his experience with newspapers was essential for the success of the Tatum's corporations. Renowned for their advertising campaigns, the Tatums promoted their developments with slogans such as "The Beautiful Ridge" - "Buy a lot in Riverside [especially since] the electric trolley line will be completed through [Riverside] in 90 days and the price of all lots will be increased 50%" - "The boom is on!" - "The most productive land in the world" - "Good, pure drinking water; paved streets and electric lights" were eye-catching expressions that created the urge to buy on the public. "If the Tatums say it's so, it's so," the Tatum brothers enjoyed a fine reputation and were esteemed by the community.

Hoyt Frazure remembered in the Nixon Smiley's book "Memories of Old Miami:"<sup>8</sup>

*The Tatum Brothers – there were four, J. H., S. M., B. B., and J.R. – Set up a bucket dredge on a barge and anchored it in the south fork of the Miami River, at NW 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and about 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Then they put full page ads in The Miami Herald and in the old Metropolis announcing "The Tatum Brothers are Draining the Everglades."*

*I have good reason to remember the dredge - of seeing it bringing up bucket full of muck from the bottom of the shallow stream; of seeing the heavy black smoke boiling out of the smoke stack; of hearing the boiler blow off steam when the sweating Negro fireman put too much fat pine wood on the fire.*

*Dad, who was a contractor, had the job of supplying the wood for the dredge. I remember hearing white-haired J. H. Tatum say to Dad: "Cap'n Frazure, have your boys get us a lot of fat Dade County pine, especially pine knots. We want plenty of black smoke to help create some real activity."*

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<sup>7</sup> McIver, Stuart B.. "The Greatest Sale on Earth – The Story of the Miami Board of Realtors, 1920-1980." E.A.seemann Publishing, INC. Miami, Florida. 1980. Page25

<sup>8</sup> Dade County FL Archives – History Books. "Draining the Everglades" chapter 8. 1965.

To promote their development across the Miami River, the Tatum brothers built a bridge on 12<sup>th</sup> Street (Flagler Street) and a short-lived railway to make their development more accessible. Before Flagler Street bridge was built, the south bank of the river was reached only by boat and by the first bridge built by Flagler on Avenue D, today's Miami Avenue, which was part of the agreement made by Julia Tuttle, William and Mary Brickell with Henry Flagler when he finally decided to bring his railroad to Miami in exchange for land. The Brickells were worried that without a bridge, the south side of the river was not going to be developed as fast as the north side.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, the *Miami Metropolis* first edition of May 15, 1896 reported that Miami lots owned by Brickell went on sale, but still there was no bridge across the river and the people who wanted to get the mail [the post office was on the south side of the river and operated by the Brickells], had to spend an hour waiting for the ferry and pay a ten-cent toll to learn if they had any mail. The *Metropolis* ridiculed the mail service and pleaded for a post office on the north side where the Miami community was firmly entrenched.<sup>10</sup>

When the Tatum brothers built the Flagler Street's bridge, scarcely anyone lived on the southwest side of the river; the bridge opened in 1905 as a toll-roadway, the tolls were steep for that era: 10 cents for a pedestrian and 25 cents for a horse-drawn cart. In 1909, the city purchased the facility and removed the tolls. After the bridge had been constructed connecting the west bank of the Miami River to the heart of downtown, Flagler Street became a major thoroughfare attracting real estate speculators, commerce, and new residents across the river. A new trolley line began operating in 1915 carrying passengers as far west as SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. In 1925, another trolley line rambled from downtown along SW 6<sup>th</sup> Street to SW 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue, where it turned north and traveled as far as NW 7<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>11</sup>

In the early 1910s, the real estate industry was starting to heat up and many out of state businessmen were attracted to South Florida due to the array of opportunities not only in real estate but all sorts of business. In 1916, the Miami Chamber of Commerce and Everest G. Sewell, a pioneer merchant, began their highly successful national advertising campaign. With slogans like "It is always June in Miami," and "Where the Summer spends the Winter," the

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<sup>9</sup> Wiggins, Larry. "The Birth of the City of Miami." *Tequesta - The Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida*. Number LV. 1995. Page 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Page 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

Chamber blanketed northern states in publications promoting Miami. Between 1914 and 1924, its advertising expenditures exceeded \$1 million. In the meantime, the city's population increased from 29,571 in 1920 to 47,000 in 1923.<sup>12</sup>

When the World War I came to an end in 1919, the whole nation entered a decade of wealth and euphoria. "The Roaring Twenties" was a period of sustained economic prosperity that emphasized social, artistic, and cultural trends. The economic recovery program of President Harding (1921) turned around America's economy that culminated with the "Coolidge Prosperity Years" when the American people experienced unprecedented prosperity.<sup>13</sup>

For the first time, it became possible for Americans to buy on credit through the credo of 'buy now, pay later' practices that ushered in the Roaring Twenties. Lines of credit were offered in all sectors of the market to families who could not pay upfront, but who could demonstrate their ability to pay in the future. More than half of the automobiles in the nation were sold on credit by the end of the 1920s. As a result, consumer debt more than doubled during the decade.<sup>14</sup>

Miami and Miami Beach were already considered eccentric tourist destinations and local developers did not delay in promoting the area to attract a portion of the sudden overflow of credit; promotional advertising was largely used for this purpose and soon the whole South Florida experienced an influx of people from all over the nation. Miami alone had its population doubled in a five-year span from 1920 to 1925, and the prices of plots of land could double or triple in a day during the height of the boom.<sup>15</sup>

While the United States enjoyed the largest economy in the world in the 1920s, Europeans struggled to restructure their countries after the end of WWI. With the collapse of the stock market, America fell into the deepest and longest economic crisis in the country's history. The Great Depression was inevitable for several reasons such as no guarantees were offered by banks to their customers, there were few regulations in place for banks, the agricultural produce

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<sup>12</sup> Livingston, Grant. "The Annexation of the City of Coconut Grove." *Tequesta - The Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida*. Number LX. 2000. Page 34.

<sup>13</sup> Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation. 1/15/2015. <http://coolidgefoundation.org/>

<sup>14</sup> Colombo, Jesse. "The Roaring Twenties Bubble & the Stock Market Crash of 1929." *The Bubble Bubble*. 1/15/2015. <http://www.thebubblebubble.com/roaring-twenties-bubble/>

<sup>15</sup> Metropolitan Dade County. "From Wilderness to Metropolis – The History and Architecture of dade County, Florida 1825-1940." 1982. Page 76.

prices fell and farmers were unable to achieve any recovery and Europeans were purchasing fewer and fewer American products as a result of their own economic difficulties.<sup>16</sup>

However, there was no other decade like the 1920s in South Florida; all factors listed above combined to culminate in the extraordinary never seen before (or after), real estate boom that changed Miami forever since – from Wilderness to Metropolis. Regardless, the euphoria of the boom was about to be shaken. On September 18, 1926, a massive hurricane hit Miami. At least 114 died, and thousands were left homeless. The city, especially along the waterfront, was flattened by the winds of 132 miles an hour and tidal surge. The monster storm passed west through Miami and out into the Gulf of Mexico, later striking Pensacola, the area north of New Orleans and on into Texas.<sup>17</sup> Miami was never the same; on that day, South Florida was plunged into a depression a good three years before the rest of the country.<sup>18</sup>

After decades of stagnating growth, the end of WWII brought another era of progress; *The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known informally as the G.I. Bill, was a law that provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans (commonly referred to as G.I.s). Benefits included low-cost mortgages, low-interest loans to start a business, cash payments of tuition and living expenses to attend university, high school or vocational education, as well as one year of unemployment compensation. It was available to every veteran who had been on active duty during the war years for at least ninety days and had not been dishonorably discharged; combat was not required.*<sup>19</sup> With the incentive, the number of new developments started to increase, and since many veterans decided to stay in or move to South Florida, Miami began growing again.

Meanwhile, Cuba was boiling with plots and conspiracies against Batista's government. Conspirators (including Fidel Castro) found Miami a safe ground to plan Batista's overthrow. By the Cuban Revolution in 1959 many wealthy Cubans had already fled to Miami; the first to leave the island were those who feared they would be imprisoned, especially high government

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<sup>16</sup> Colombo, Jesse. "The Roaring Twenties Bubble & the Stock Market Crash of 1929." The Bubble Bubble. 1/15/2015. <http://www.thebubblebubble.com/roaring-twenties-bubble/>

<sup>17</sup> Kleinberg, Howard. "Miami - The way we were." Miami Daily News Inc. 1985.

<sup>18</sup> Metropolitan Dade County. "From Wilderness to Metropolis – The History and Architecture of dade County, Florida 1825-1940." 1982. Page 95.

<sup>19</sup> Wikipedia. "G.I.Bill." last modified on 2 January 2015.[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G.I.\\_Bill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G.I._Bill)

officials and the financial elite that managed to transfer great amounts of money to establish accounts in the USA.<sup>20</sup>

As a result of the volume of cash being transferred from Cuba to the U.S., Fidel Castro imposed several obstacles to the émigré who (then) was allowed to carry only five dollars in cash and a suitcase, leaving behind their properties and possessions which were immediately confiscated. The first wave of immigrants was composed of doctors, attorneys, professors, and highly skilled people who were denied the right to practice their profession in the U.S. mostly because of the language barrier. With no money, the exiles started to compete for unskilled jobs and public welfare overburdening Miami's public resources and inflating the labor market.<sup>21</sup>

Cheap rent and the proximity to downtown led refugees to settle in the Riverside neighborhood, which was transformed overnight into a Hispanic quarter, the overwhelming number of exiles kept growing every day; "Little Havana" was born. United, the compatriots did not take long to organize themselves and start to plot against Castro's regime. Soon the streets, restaurants and businesses (most of which owned by Cubans now) turned into the heart of heated political discussions and plots to overthrow Fidel Castro. According to historian Arva Parks:

*The exiles flocked to Riverside, a Miami area which already had a small Cuban population. Riverside was an older, fully developed, middle-class neighborhood in the throes of decline. Former residents were rapidly moving to Miami's newer suburbs and the area's merchants were following closely behind. The Cuban refugees took advantage of vacant apartments, low rents, and declining property values and within a few years had not only stopped the decline, they had transformed the area into a vital new community: "La Sagilescra," Miami's "Little Havana."*<sup>22</sup>

Since so many professionals and entrepreneurs left Cuba about the same time, once in Miami they quickly rebuilt their network. Cherishing their culture and traditions, they rebuilt in Miami "replicas" of Cuban restaurants and cafeterias which started to transform Riverside into Little Havana. In addition, new versions of Cuban establishments including supermarkets like Sedano's and Veradero, bakeries, flower shops, and funeral homes thrived due to the Hispanic

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<sup>20</sup> Levine, Robert M. and Asi, Moises. "Cuban Miami". Rutgers University Press, 2000. Page 23

<sup>21</sup> Sicius, Francis J Ph.D. "The Miami-Havana Connection: The First Seventy-Five Years". Tequesta LVIII. 1998

<sup>22</sup> Arva Parks & Company. "Calle Ocho Interpretive Center Concept and Documentation." Prepared for the City of Miami. August, 1993.

population increase in the area. Many industries were also shifted to Miami, brands like Conchita, Bustelo and La Llave coffees, La Estrella, Gilda, and La Lachera; entrepreneurs such as the Bacardi family, brought with them their rum formula and trademark to restart anew in Miami. The network of Cuban business kept the compatriots together physically and psychologically facilitating the exile's life who found a safe environment within the Spanish-speaking enclave.

In addition, the Miami's Catholic Church orchestrated the "Operation Peter Pan" (Operacion Pedro Pan), which consisted of a mass exodus of unaccompanied children from Cuba to Miami between 1960 and 1962. The whole operation was to avoid Catholic Cuban children from ending up in Communist hands and being educated by a Marxist regime. The program that later obtained the support of the U.S. government was coordinated by James Baker (formerly head of a school for Americans and wealthy Cubans in Havana), Father Bryan Walsh of the "Catholic Welfare Bureau" (CWB), and the "Centro Hispano Catolico" at Gesu Church in downtown Miami. Fourteen thousand children landed in Miami during these two years and were placed under the CWB's care until they could be reunited with their parents who expected a short period of separation since they were sure of the near overthrow of Fidel Castro.<sup>23</sup>

Upon the missile crisis, Castro halted all flights to Miami (1962) and prohibited Cubans to travel to the U.S. greatly upsetting the Cubans that were already living in Miami. Afterward, from 1965 through 1973 Castro decided to resume flights to Miami; two daily flights – "The Freedom Flights" - brought into the city an average of 3,000 exiles per month, mostly elderly people who had relatives in Miami and people of middle and working-class backgrounds. This second wave of immigration overwhelmed local authorities who encouraged the newcomers to settle elsewhere, but the majority found their way back to Miami later on. In May 1973, angry at the U.S. embargo on trade with Cuba, Castro once more ended the flights.<sup>24</sup>

At that juncture, Little Havana was thriving, especially with the great influx of federal money and the millions brought in by the wealthy Cuban citizens and their businesses. Southwest 8th Street, now called "Calle Ocho," was a replica of Havana's business core. The move of big businesses from Cuba to Miami also shifted the Caribbean trade center to Miami which later

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

became known as “The Gateway to the Americas” and forever changed the city’s political, economic, and social scenarios.

However, in 1980 another wave of Cuban refugees washed on the Miami’s Shore, “The Mariel Exodus” as it became known. Due to the trade embargo and the collapse of the Cuban economy, many poor, unemployed, and helpless Cubans were desperate to leave the island.

*On April 1, 1980, Jose Rodriguez Gallegos, a bus driver rammed his minibus through the gates of the Peruvian embassy in Havana in an effort to gain political asylum. During the ensuing melee, a Cuban guard was killed. Fidel Castro angrily withdrew police protection from the embassy, a move that brought over 10,000 Cubans from all parts of the island to the embassy in search of refuge. This public demonstration of a yearning to leave Cuba was a major embarrassment to the Castro regime that felt compelled to open the port of Mariel, declaring that anyone wishing to leave could do so.<sup>25</sup>*

Cuban exiles in Miami did not waste time chartering boats to pick their relatives up in the Mariel Port; once there, they were forced to bring along people that they did not know, and some were later known to be unwanted delinquents and mentally disturbed people who Fidel Castro called “scum” of the country. Even though, the “undesirables” were only 10% of the new arrivals, a negative campaign against them took place locally, especially in the Miami Herald coverage of the Mariel exodus event. As the voice of the Anglo community, The Miami Herald stressed the negative impact of the additional number of exiles to the already large Cuban population.<sup>26</sup>

As the nonstop waves of immigrants hit Miami through the years, many other immigrants from countries with similar political issues and/or economic hardship seized the opportunity and people from all over South and Central Americas and the Caribbean started to pour in by land, air and sea. To prevent chaos, the Regan administration signed an immigration agreement with Cuba for the repatriation of 2,746 “undesirables” and limited the number of Cuban immigrants to 20,000 a year. Consequently, the nation was urged to rethink immigration and foreign policies.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Portes, Alejandro and Stepick, Alex. “City on the Edge – The Transformation of Miami.” University of California Press. 1993. Page 18.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Page 26

<sup>27</sup> De la Cova, Antonio Rafael. “Mariel Boatlift.” The Eighties in America. <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/academic/mariel.pdf>

Nonetheless, they kept on coming; Cubans and Haitians risked their lives on rafts or anything that floated to reach the U.S. soil - the “Balseros.” The most famous rafter (Balsero) was a five-year-old boy who was found floating in an inner tube, surrounded by dolphins, by two fishermen off the coast on Thanksgiving Day 1999, his name: Elian Gonzalez. His mother, stepfather, and seven others had drowned trying to arrive in the U.S.; Elian Gonzalez was taken in by his mother’s relatives with the support and sympathy of the Cuban community. Fidel Castro, who did not leave a stone unturned, demanded Elian to be returned to Cuba to his biological father initiating a commotion that was closely followed by the whole world.

In the interim, the Cuban community wasted no time establishing itself in the U.S. political, economic, and social scenarios. The Cuban businesses were booming and becoming known nationwide; many Cubans seized political careers becoming county, city and community leaders, even senators such as Marco Rubio in 2009. As the well-established Cubans moved out to adjacent cities like Hialeah and Coral Gables, Little Havana welcomed other Hispanic nationalities as Nicaraguans, Hondurans, and Salvadorans among others. Even though, the area has undergone through many periods of gentrification; it has always retained the Latin flavor introduced by the Cubans that characterizes the neighborhood today.

The Riverview Historic District is one of the last remaining portions of the Riverside/Little Havana area that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, and continuity of resources with a high degree of integrity which qualify the small district as eligible for historic designation under the City of Miami Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 23). The architectural period of significance is 1920 – 1950, period in which most of the contributing buildings were built and the cultural period of significance is between the 1920s and 1960s; the time period in which the area went through its biggest transformation from pine woods to the thriving Hispanic neighborhood.



### III- Description

The Riverview Historic District consists of one hundred thirteen (113) resources built in the interim period of 1920 and 2009. The district's architectural period of significance spans from 1920 and 1950, being the large majority of the contributing buildings erected in the 1920s and 1930s and some examples of the 1940s architecture. The number of contributing resources is eighty three (83) and non-contributing, thirty (30); the majority of the contributing buildings are in the Mission and Mediterranean styles of architecture; a few examples of Bungalows, Art Deco, and court-yard Mid-Century Modern structures along with a couple of apartment building complexes and commercial buildings are also found to be contributing to the historic district's character and sense of place.

The bulk of structures within the Riverview Historic District is multi-family apartment buildings. The oldest ones were built in the 1920s and 1930s in the Central Hall architectural typology. The Central Hall apartment buildings were very popular at the time, usually three to four stories in height with a central corridor distributing symmetrically the apartments on both sides with a staircase at the end connecting the upper floors (no elevators). The Central Hall apartment buildings were economical, built for the working middle-class; usually central hall apartment buildings are plain, rectangular in shape, with a stylized façade in the trendy architectural styles of the era, Mission and Mediterranean.

Bungalows were also very popular within the Little Havana area. Moderate-cost housing was in demand at the beginning of the twentieth century due to an increase of the working-class population, that was attracted to the region during the boom era. Riverside was the new suburban neighborhood for the moderate income population and the bungalow was the preferred style of single-family homes for being economical and perfect for the local climate.

President Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" was a combination of federal funded "relief, reform, and recovery" programs created to combat the harsh effects of the Great Depression. The "National Recovery Act" of 1933 authorized, among other agencies, the "Public Works Administration" (PWA) to provide assistance in the construction of public buildings such as

schools, post offices, hospitals, and etc; it also assisted with slum clearance and low-cost housing projects. The PWA closely followed contemporary models established by post-war European architects in designing the housing complexes; the emphasis was placed on creating functional living spaces that were devoid of expensive ornamental architectural features. Building placement and spacing creating small enclaves with lush landscaping were characteristics of these housing complexes that became a pattern throughout America in the late 1930s through the 1940s.<sup>28</sup> A few examples of low-cost housing complexes built in the New Deal era can be found in the Riverview Historic District.

The commercial buildings within the district are typical neighborhood mom-and-pop general stores from before car-oriented super-suburban era. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the age of the small-scale retail business usually owned and operated by the members of one single family - mom-and-pop stores. In the late 1800s early 1900s with the establishment of new street railways and trolleys, residents moved into more decentralized neighborhoods usually segregated by class and ethnicity. These new groceries, meat markets, vegetable stands, and bakeries emerged to meet this local population immediate needs. The mom-and-pop grocery stores were very common in Jewish communities throughout the nation at the time.

Riverview is a typical example of early middle-class suburban neighborhood of the beginning of the twentieth century in Miami. The district still carries the characteristics of that time and is one of the last portions of the Riverside area that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, and continuity of resources with a high degree of integrity.

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<sup>28</sup> Tohnston, Sidney. "Florida's New Deal Resources, A Research Tool and Predicative Model." NRHP Multiple Property Form. Survey # 11495. 2004.

Below, the architectural styles found in the district:<sup>29</sup>

### BUNGALOW (1910s-1930s)

Bungalows were one of the most popular residential styles in the nation during the first three decades of the twentieth century. These modest, comfortable houses were built primarily from mail-order house plans. South Florida bungalows are

### MISSION (1910s-1930s)

The simple Mission-style buildings were inspired by the early Spanish mission churches in California. Exterior walls are usually covered with stucco, although oolitic limestone is also used. The most distinctive features of the style are tiled roofs and arches. Roofs are commonly low in pitch or flat, featuring curvilinear parapets or pent roof sections. The same parapet lines are often repeated over the front porch. Parapets may be topped with simple stucco molding, or with a single row of sloping Mission tiles. Cylindrical tiles, or scuppers, drain rainwater. Windows may be sash or casement type. Arches are typical on the facade and common on other openings. The front porch sometimes extends over the carport or garage entrance to one side of the main building mass. Applied decoration is kept to a minimum.

### MEDITERRANEAN (1910s-1930s)

The Mediterranean style defined Miami during the Boom of the 1920s. The style reflects the architectural influences of the Mediterranean coast: Italian, Byzantine, Moorish themes from southern Spain, and French. Applied Spanish baroque decoration is generously used around openings, balconies, and cornices. Parapets, twisted columns, pediments, and other classical details also are frequently used. Arches are often featured. The most common materials are stucco walls, red tile roofs, wrought iron grilles and railings, wood brackets and balconies, and oolitic limestone, ceramic tile and terra cotta for ornament. Patios, courtyards, balconies, and loggias replace the front porch. Fenestration is usually the casement type. With its elaborate detailing, Mediterranean architecture works best in large buildings.

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<sup>29</sup> Taken entirely from <http://www.historicpreservationmiami.com/style.html> (1/22/2015).

### ART DECO (1920s-1940s)

The Art Deco style first arrived in America after the Paris Exposition of 1925, where it was promoted as a fusion of the decorative arts and industry and technology. Art Deco was a relaxed precursor of the International style. The style features applied decoration based on organic forms and geometric patterns, executed in the latest construction materials and methods. Forms are angular, and facades often stepped back, especially in taller buildings. Decorative elements range from industrial to Egyptian, Mayan, and American Indian themes. Building forms and decoration generally have a vertical orientation. In South Florida, nautical and tropical motifs, such as palm trees, flamingos, pelicans, the moon, and the ocean, are reflected in bas-relief stucco panels, etched glass, and murals. The related "Moderne" style evolved from Art Deco.

## **IV- Application of Criteria for Designation**

The “Riverview Historic District” is eligible to be designated as a historic district by the City of Miami for having significance in the historical, cultural, aesthetic, and architectural heritage of the city, and possessing integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; and for meeting the following criteria:

### **(3) Exemplify the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community;**

The Riverview Historic District is one of the last remaining portions of the Riverside area that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, and continuity of resources with a high degree of integrity in the East Little Havana area. The district exemplifies the historical context of the city, since the real estate boom era in the 1920s until the region became known as Little Havana in the 1960s and the cultural, political, economic, and social transformations of the community and city as a whole.

### **(4) Portray the environment in an era of history characterized by one or more distinctive architectural styles;**

The Riverview Historic District reflects the architectural trends of the period between 1920 and 1950 with a concentration of buildings designed in the Mediterranean, Mission, Bangalow, Art Deco, and Mid-Century Modern styles adapted to the Florida’s climate and fitted for the moderate income population that settled in the region.

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## VI- Photographs

















## VIII. Building Inventory List

<b>Building Number</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Folio Number</b>	<b>Year Built</b>	<b>Status</b>
1	868 SW 2 Street	01-4138-003-4140	1920	Contributing
2	876 SW 2 Street	01-4138-003-4160	1928	Contributing
3	900 SW 2 Street	01-4138-003-1320	1946	Non-Contributing
4	910 SW 2 Street	01-4138-003-1330	1946	Non-Contributing
5A	930 SW 2 Street	01-4138-003-1400	1946	Contributing
5B	930 SW 2 Street	01-4138-003-1400	1946	Contributing
5C	930 SW 2 Street	01-4138-003-1400	1946	Contributing
5D	930 SW 2 Street	01-4138-003-1400	1946	Contributing
5E	930 SW 2 Street	01-4138-003-1400	1946	Contributing
6	870 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-3920	1955	Non-Contributing
7	871 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-4200	1925	Contributing
8	879 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-4180	1925	Contributing
9	880 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-3940	2005	Non-Contributing
10	900 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1390	1949	Contributing
11A	931 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1340	1947	Contributing
11B	931 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1340	1947	Contributing
11C	931 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1340	1947	Contributing
11D	931 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1340	1947	Contributing
11E	931 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1340	1947	Contributing
11F	931 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1340	1947	Contributing
11G	931 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1340	1947	Contributing
11H	931 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1340	1947	Contributing
11I	931 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1340	1947	Contributing
12	922 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1400	2009	Non-Contributing
13	928 SW 3 Street	01-4138-101-0001	2004	Non-Contributing
14	934 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1420	1931	Contributing
15	948 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1430	2008	Non-Contributing
16	956 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1440	1925	Contributing
17	964 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1450	1925	Contributing
18	981 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1371	1988	Non-Contributing
19	982 SW 3 Street	01-4138-003-1470	1921	Contributing
20	1018 SW 3 Street	01-4102-005-3750	1987	Non-Contributing
21	1028 SW 3 Street	01-4102-005-3760	1925	Contributing

22	1036 SW 3 Street	01-4102-005-3770	1925	Contributing
23	862 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-2620	c.1924	Contributing
24	869 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-3970	1920	Contributing
25	900 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1570	1937	Contributing
26	918 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1580	1940	Contributing
27	926 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1590	1940	Contributing
28A	931 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1540	1948	Contributing
28B	931 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1540	1948	Contributing
28C	931 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1540	1948	Contributing
28D	931 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1540	1948	Contributing
28E	931 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1540	1948	Contributing
29	936 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1600	1966	Non-Contributing
30	945 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1530	1973	Non-Contributing
31	946 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1610	1926	Contributing
32	953 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1520	1926	Contributing
33	954 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1620	1966	Non-Contributing
34	959 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1510	1924	Non-Contributing
35	960 SW 4 Street	01-4138-026-0001	1975	Non-Contributing
36	965 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1500	1925	Contributing
37	977 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1490	1926	Contributing
38	979 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1480	1925	Contributing
39	984 SW 4 Street	01-4138-003-1650	1930	Contributing
40	987 SW 4 Street	01-4102-002-0550	1924	Contributing
41	990 SW 4 Street	01-4102-002-0560	1967	Non-Contributing
42	1011 SW 4 Street	01-4102-005-3880	1937	Contributing
43	1012 SW 4 Street	01-4102-005-4200	1925	Contributing
44	1020 SW 4 Street	01-4102-005-4210	2009	Non-Contributing
45	1026 SW 4 Street	01-4102-005-4220	1925	Contributing
46	891 SW 5 Street	01-4138-005-0012	1956	Non-Contributing
47	901 SW 5 Street	01-4138-003-1561	1924	Contributing
48	920 SW 5 Street	01-4138-003-1770	1925	Contributing
49	929 SW 5 Street	01-4138-003-1730	1926	Contributing
50	937 SW 5 Street	01-4138-003-1720	1924	Contributing
51	941 SW 5 Street	01-4138-003-1710	1966	Non-Contributing
52	951 SW 5 Street	01-4138-003-1700	1966	Non-Contributing
53	959 SW 5 Street	01-4138-003-1690	1924	Contributing
54	967 SW 5 Street	01-4138-003-1680	1925	Contributing
55	977 SW 5 Street	01-4138-003-1670	1924	Contributing
56	985 SW 5 Street	01-4138-003-1660	1924	Contributing



57	995 SW 5 Street	01-4102-003-0030	1930	Contributing
58	1011 SW 5 Street	01-4102-005-4330	1936	Contributing
59	1021 SW 5 Street	01-4102-005-4310	1925	Contributing
60	1029 SW 5 Street	01-4102-005-4300	1925	Contributing
61	211 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-003-4170	1922	Contributing
62	215 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-003-4150	1969	Non-Contributing
63	219 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-003-4190	1925	Contributing
64	321 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-003-3930	1927	Contributing
65	329 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-003-3960	1975	Non-Contributing
66	345 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-003-3950	1948	Non-Contributing
67	410 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-003-1560	1937	Contributing
68	421 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-005-0010	1956	Non-Contributing
69	431 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-005-0011	1956	Non-Contributing
70	500 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-003-1750	1949	Contributing
71	501 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-003-2520	1946	Contributing
72	528 SW 9 Avenue	01-4138-003-1950	1925	Contributing
73	203 SW 10 Avenue	01-4138-003-1340	1936	Non-Contributing
74	211 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0450	1926	Contributing
75	219 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0430	1926	Contributing
76	227 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0460	1936	Non-Contributing
77	235 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0470	1926	Non-Contributing
78	243 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0480	1926	Contributing
79	301 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0490	1927	Contributing
80	304 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-005-3720	1962	Non-Contributing
81	310 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-005-3730	1972	Non-Contributing
82	311 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0500	1935	Contributing
83	314 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-055-3740	1925	Contributing
84	315 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0510	1920	Contributing
85	328 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-005-3870	1937	Contributing
86	329 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0520	1920	Contributing
87	330 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-005-3890	1937	Non-Contributing
88	337 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0530	1930	Contributing
89	340 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-005-3900	1930	Contributing
90	345 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-002-0540	1925	Contributing
91	400 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-005-4190	1925	Contributing
92	410 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-005-4180	1930	Contributing
93	412 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-005-4170	1925	Contributing
94A	425 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-003-0010	1930	Contributing
94B	425 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-003-0010	1930	Contributing

95	426 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-005-4320	1921	Contributing
96	434 SW 10 Avenue	01-4102-005-4340	1921	Contributing